Castle trail of the Lodzkie Region

The history of the regional lands dates back to the very beginnings of Polish statehood. Since those days, the area has been developing with various objects constituting the material culture of man and witnessing many important events in the history of our homeland and nation. Today they are unmissable landmarks and tourist attractions. A unique place on their list are local castles, many of which are not widely known. Following the route designed for you will enable you to get acquainted with nearly 30 castles in our region – an attraction in which the beginner as well as the connoisseur of the countryside will find something of interest. The trail forms of a loop running through almost all of the "castle towns" and is intended primarily for tourists travelling by car, although some sections can also be visited by tourists using bicycles as their main means of transport.

Castles appeared in the Polish landscape with the development of the art of masonry. Initially, stone rotundas were built inside burgs to serve as castle chapels. In the mid-13th century, masonry towers became a basic elements of the castle. Soon after the defensive structures were build primarily of brick. A typical castle complex consisted of several buildings encircled by the perimeter walls. Its basic elements, in addition to the tower or towers mentioned above, included a gate, a chapel, a house serving the role of the owner's residence and an outbuilding. The first type of castles were motte-and-bailey structures, followed by tower houses. With the proliferation of artillery, a new defence system called bulwarks developed, enabling effective defence against firearms that around mid-16th century evolved into a bastion system, the forerunner of later bastion forts.

The primary feature of castles was their defensive function, but with the end of the Middle Ages their buildings began to give them representative features, effectively turning them into residences. Manor houses, such as those in Pabianice or Działoszyń, could also have acted as defensive structures, but in fact they never were real castles (which is why they are not a part of the trail).

Over the centuries, roughly 30 castles have been built within the current borders of Łódzkie Region. The majority is a substantial number, given the size of the region and the specificity of its geographical location. Some of the buildings are preserved today in their full glory, albeit after reconstructions (Byki, Łęczyca, Oporzno, Tporów, Piotrków Trybunalski, Uniejów), while others are preserved as ruins constituting a picturesque element of the landscape (Bąkowa Góra, Besiekiery, Bolesławiec, Drzewica, Inowłódz, Łowicz, Majkowice, Rawa Mazowiecka, Wojsławice). There are also a few sites whose only traces are relics hidden either in buildings erected on their site at a later date or underground (Gorzkowice, "Surdęga" castle in Majkowice, Nowa Brzeźnica, Przedbórz, Sieradz, Sobota, Ujazd, Wieluń, Wieruszów, Wolbórz). There are also several castles have not been identified in the field and we know them only from archival records (Brzeziny, Skierniewice, Strykow, Toplin, Zameczek near Oporzno).

A trip along the castle trail in the Lodzkie Region will certainly be an excellent way to spend your free time in the region and a unique opportunity to discover its cultural wealth.

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One of the parish priests of the local parish was Father Antoni Kraszewski, cousin of the writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski who was a frequent visitor to Bąkowa Góra. During one of his visits, he found the inspiration to write the novel "Jelita — the coat of arms legend", making the robber-knight Bąk (the robber figure sits on the castle wall) one of its characters.

Royall castle in Łęczyca

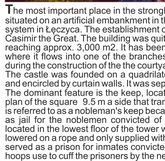

P. Sowiecki

The most important place in the stronghold was occupied by the Gothic royal castle, situated on an artificial embankment in the south-eastern corner of the walled decice system in Łęczyca. The establishment of the fortress is related to the initiative of King Casimir the Great. The building was quite substantial for the time with its surface area reaching approx. 3,000 m2. It has been situated at the mouth of the Wróblinek River, where it flows into one of the branches of the Bzura. It was a waterlogged site, so during the construction of the the courtyard the ground level was raised by five metres. The castle was founded on a quadrilateral ground plan measuring 43x44x59x63 m and encircled by curtain walls. It was separated from the city only by a moat.

The dominant feature is the keep, located in the south-west corner and build on the plan of the square 9.5 m a side that transforms into an octagon in its upper storeys. It is referred to as a nobleman's keep because, according to records from 1433, it served as jail for the noblemen convicted of serious offences. The prison dungeon was located in the lowest floor of the tower with no window openings. The prisoners were lowered on a rope and only supplied with bread and water. The upper part of the tower served as a prison for inmates convicted of lighter offences. Inside were jougs – iron hoops used to cuffle prisoners by the neck or wrists. Today, the top floor of the keep is used as a viewing point (the entrance is located in a porch on the perimeter wall).

The entrance to the castle from the town side led over a drawbridge and through a quadrangular gate tower incorporated into the western part of the curtain wall. On the axis of the entrance along the eastern curtain wall stands the so-called powder magazine. The two-storey dwelling house, which had the character of a monarch's residence, resembled an elongated rectangle in shape. It was divided by a vestibule into a representative part – the southern section with one or two rooms on each level – and a northern section with two bays and divided into three rooms on each floor.

The courtyard was filled with wooden buildings. Today, along the western curtain wall, between the gate tower and the northern wall, there is the so-called 'new house', which was built in Renaissance style in the 1660s on the initiative of Jan Lubinski, local starost and a close friend of King Sigismund Augustus. During the works, the window openings were also rebuilt, receiving richly decorated stonework details. The interior decoration was also changed.


P. Sowiecki

In the 17th and 18th centuries the castle went into decline and in the 19th century it was only used as a storage facility. Renovation work was started only after the Second World War. Currently, the fortress houses the Museum of Łęczyca Land.

Museum of Łęczyca Land
99-100 Łęczyca, ul. Zamkowa 1, phone: 602 583 435, www.muzeumleczyca.pl
The exhibitions feature a rich display demonstrating the history of the castle and Łęczyca land as well as presenting local folklore. The piece de resistance of the museum is the largest collection of demonic sculptures in Poland, depicting the devil Boruta, the legendary lord of the castle. The museum also conducts scientific and educational activities. Every year at the end of August, the castle courtyard comes alive, becoming the setting for one of the country's largest knightly tournaments.

After the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, captured Teutonic Commanders were imprisoned here.
In 1420 Władysław Jagiełło was offered the crown of Bohemia by the Czechs, which the king rejected.
King Casimir Jagiellon was the most frequent visitor to the castle, staying there as many as 40 times. His wife Elisabeth also lived in the castle for nearly ten years.
The newly elected King Sigismund III Vasa was officially welcomed within the walls of the fortress.
According to one legend, King Casimir the Great's retinue on its way to Łęczyca got lost in the surrounding forests, and the royal coach got stuck in the swamps so that none of the courtiers could pull it out. Unexpectedly, a stocky, bulky man named Boruta appeared and pulled the carriage with ease. The grateful monarch promised the when he dies, the newly built castle will become his saviour's possession. However, the monarch did not know that Boruta was none other the devil himself. And so, since the 14th century, the new lord of the castle, the devil Boruta, has been roaming the castle dungeons on cloudy days.

Royall castle in Opoczno


L. Dwdyński


Museum in Opoczno

Along with the location of the town in 1365, King Casimir the Great began the construction of the royal castle, which served as the auxiliary seat of the state administration, represented by the starost. The castle served as the defensive centre of the Sandomierz region with the city of Opoczno against Tartar and Lithuanian incursions. It formed part of the urban fortifications in the southern part of Opoczno. Being situated on the River Drzewiczka only added to its defensive value. The original Gothic fortress was rectangular in plan, with the keep in the western part of the foundation and an entrance gate located in its south-eastern part.

In the 15th century, the castle was burnt down during a town fire. By the next century it already was abandoned, but was partially rebuilt in the early 17th century. According to a 1629 inspection, the building had a tower known as the nobleman's tower without stairs, several rooms, a municipal office and a burgrave's residence.

It was destroyed during the Swedish invasion (1655-1660). Its ruins survived in a state of disrepair until the 19th century. Between 1874 and 1875 the castle was rebuilt using the surviving foundations and wall fragments as a starting point.

Renaissance Revival attics and a portal over the main entrance were added in 1927. Unfortunately, these works have completely obliterated the earlier shape of the building. The structure has survived to the present day.

Today it is a two-storey building consisting of two interconnected wings. In the western part of one wing, there is a gate with a vaulted open bay with lunettes and arcades. On the north wall it is decorated with the Odrowąż coat of arms. On the south side, there is a balcony with a decorative balustrade over the gate passage. The manon proper can be entered via two entrances with portals: the first is located in the north part of the south-west wing, the second is in the western part of the other wing. The castle is decorated with a Renaissance Revival attic. In several rooms, relics of the Gothic walls of the original stronghold can be seen.

Regional Museum in Opoczno
26-300 Opoczno, Rynek 1, phone: 44 755 23 19, www.muzeumopoczno.pl
The museum's extensive exhibition includes collections illustrating the history of the town and the castle, household tools and utensils, as well as handicrafts showing the Opoczno folklore (magnificent striped garments, rich embroideries, intricate cut-outs).

The most interesting of the many Opoczno legends is the one about the love of King Casimir the Great, who often stayed in Opoczno because of the local Jewish girl Esterka (see illustration). Once, when a girl was gathering herbs in the forest, an enraged auroch emerged and attacked her. Moments before he could reach her, he collapsed to the ground struck by a fatal blow death by a brave hunter. The latter, accompanied by a royal courier, fell in love with the girl who also got infatuated with him. After some time, however, it came to light that the hunter was none other than the King Casimir himself. The monarch built a house for his beloved, connected to the castle by a secret passage.


P. Sowiecki

Archbishop's castle in Oporów


P. Sowiecki

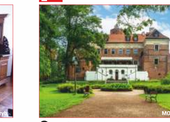
The history of Oporów is closely tied to the distinguished Oporowski family of the Sulima coat of arms. The most prominent representative of this family was Władysław Oporowski, Archbishop of Gniezno from 1449 to 1453. This prominent politician and statesman erected a magnificent Gothic castle on the family estate between 1434 and 1449. The archbishop's residence, which still exists today, was built on an artificially raised island, surrounded by a deep moat, on the site of an earlier building owned by Mikołaj Oporowski from the early 15th century.

The castle was built on the plan of a 25 x 30 m quadrangle and originally consisted of a three-storey residential and defence tower with a basement located in the north-west corner of the castle, which was the oldest element of the foundation, and probably an unfinished residential house, built along the eastern curtain wall. A two-storey single-aisle dwelling house measuring 8.5 x 23.5 m was eventually built along the south wing, connected to the northern tower by a west wing with a gate opening, and to the north and east a set of curtain walls topped by ramparts with walkways for the guards. The building's beauty is enhanced by a Romantic tower protruding in front of the eastern wall, built on a semi-elliptical plan, which runs into a hexagon at the height of the first storey. It served both a military function – in the Renaissance era it has been adapted for the use of firearms – and a religious function, as the first floor once housed the castle chapel. The fortification was built of moulded Gothic brick and, as can be seen in the corners, of specially hewn stones. The wall is decorated with a pattern laid out in vitrified brick. Despite the passage of more than five centuries, the fortress has retained its magnificent Gothic-Renaissance character.

Oporów Castle Museum, 99-322 Oporów, phone: 24 285 91 22, www.zamekoporow.pl
The museum boasts a permanent exhibition of stylish interiors. Particularly noteworthy architectural elements include the Gothic portal at the entrance to the former chapel in the keep, the ribbed vault in the chapel with its keystone adorned with the Sulima coat of arms, the original Gothic lierne vault in the bedroom and the ceiling made of larch wood decorated with 17th-century polychrome in the rooms on the first floor. In the meticulously restored chambers, including the Knights' Hall, the armoury, the dining room, the bedroom and the treasury, extremely valuable artifacts are exhibited, including a collection of paintings and sculptures, richly decorated furniture, militaria and handicrafts. The castle hosts music concerts, theatre performances, lectures and special celebrations. The museum also organises lectures on art, Old Polish customs and regional history.

One legend tells of a beautiful daughter of Oporów castellan who was said to have fallen in love with a monk from a nearby convent. The place where the lovers met was the dungeon connecting the castle and the monastery. On one occasion, however, a passageway caved in over the girl running along the underground passageways, interrupting their clandestine trysts once and for all. A boulder, symbolizing justice, remains stuck at the site of the tragedy to this day. On rainy, cloudy days near the stone, the groans of the castellan's daughter can be heard from under the ground. Some say they will continue until someone finds the entrance to the underground and frees the "White Lady of Oporów".

Royal castle in Piotrków Trybunalski


Museum in Piotrków Tryb.

In the eastern part of the city, in a suburb called Wielka Wieś, on the left bank of the Strawa River, a castle was built on an earth mound reinforced with pine logs and surrounded by a moat to serve as the seat of the ruler during the Sejm sessions. The fortress' construction of the castle was initiated by King Sigismund the Old.

The residence was probably built on the site of an earlier wooden defensive structure from the 13th or 14th century, mentioned in sources in 1510. It was built between 1512 and 1519 to a design by Benedict of Sandomierz, a leading Renaissance masonry architect in Poland. The castle took on the form of a residential and defensive tower well known in the Middle Ages, which was also given a residential character worthy of the Renaissance era. The three-storey brick building with a high basement was built on a near-square plan measuring 18x20 and features a hewn stones, a characteristic Gothic-Renaissance window openings and rich portals. The floors were made of red marble. The ground-floor section served an utility purpose, while the upper two storeys were residential. The royal suite located on the first floor consisted of a hall, a chamber and a representative hall. On the top floor was the 'palatium-stubam superiorem' room. Each successive storey is taller than the previous one.

Museum in Piotrków Trybunalski
97-300 Piotrków Trybunalski, Plac Zamkowy 4, phone: 44 646 52 72, www.muzeumpiotrkow.pl
The museum's most valuable exhibitions include the prehistory of the Piotrków area, the history of the town and the castle, a procession of Polish kings and dukes by an anonymous author from the second half of the 18th century, a collection of firearms and melee weapons, and a collection of religious art.

In 1493, a bicameral parliament of Poland was formed in Piotrków.
Between 1406 and 1492 Piotrków was the venue for 58 knights' assemblies and conventions with 38 sessions of the bicameral Diet and 29 episcopal synods being held here between 1493 and 1567.
In the years 1578-1792 Piotrków was also the seat of the Crown Tribunal.

Archbishop's castle in Uniejów


MO in Uniejów

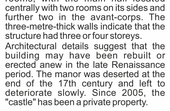
One of the most valuable monuments of the region is the magnificent fortress located approx. 300 m west of Uniejów's market square. The castle was built on an artificial embankment, on the western bank of the Warta River, in a location further protected by oxbow lakes and wet meadows. Today, the castle is one of the best-preserved defensive buildings in our province. The fortress has features of several architectural styles, the result of successive reconstructions since the Middle Ages.

The quadrilateral structure is made up of three residential wings: the western wing, the southern wing with the entrance gate and the eastern wing reaching up to the 25 m high cylindrical Gothic tower, located in the middle of the eastern curtain wall. A Gothic curtain wall encloses the site to the north. It is worth mentioning that for centuries the most important function of the fortress was to protect the treasures of the Church of from the turmoil of war.

Until the beginning of the 16th century, the Uniejów castle had protected the church estate on as many as ten occasions. During the Thirteen Years' War which broke out in 1454, the treasures were hidden in several chests and consisted of, among other item, six richly decorated chasubles, several expensive capes and dalmaticas donated by monarchs, monstrances, liturgical chalices, a chaplet, precious stones, pastorals, gold nuggets, pieces of silver, liturgical books and what was of greatest importance in the Middle Ages – the relics of saints. The latter included the head and hand of Saint Adalbert, the head of Saint Gereon, the hand and ring of Saint Stanislaus and the relics of the eleven thousand virgins – companions of Saint Ursula the Martyr. The building currently houses a hotel and restaurant and is directly adjacent to the "Terma Uniejów" spa complex.

The legend has it that when walking through the castle park on a cloudy night, one can spot lady Toli in a white dress – the wife of General Toli, one of the 19th-century owners of the castle. She is said to be looking for archbishop's treasures hidden centuries ago somewhere in the castle park.

Knights' castle in Bąkowa Góra


D. Redlicki

Between the 14th and 15th centuries, Bąkowa Góra was the centre of the ten-village estate of the Bąk knightly family of the Zadora coat of arms. Today, its only remains are small ruins of a defensive building, usually referred to as a castle. However, after more in-depth research, the building should rather be considered a defensive manor house. It was probably a defensive residential tower, or keep.

This building was constructed in the 15th century on the initiative of Zbigniew Bąk the Elder or his son, Zbigniew Bąk the Younger, who were the most closest associates of King Władysław Jagiełło. The building was largely built of the local stone. Its surviving relics include the lower part of a 15th-century building erected on a rectangular plan measuring approx. 14x20 m with two avant-corps located on the axis of the longer walls. The manor house had five rooms, with the main hall located centrally with two rooms on its sides and further two in the avant-corps. The three-metre-thick walls indicate that the structure had three or four storeys.

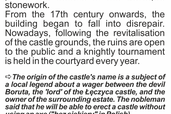
Architectural details suggest that the building has been rebuilt or erected anew in the late Renaissance period. The manor was deserted at the end of the 17th century and left to deteriorate slowly. Since 2005, the "castle" has been a private property.

According to the legend, King Casimir the Great's retinue on its way to Łęczyca got lost in the surrounding forests, and the royal coach got stuck in the swamps so that none of the courtiers could pull it out. Unexpectedly, a stocky, bulky man named Boruta appeared and pulled the carriage with ease. The grateful monarch promised the when he dies, the newly built castle will become his saviour's possession. However, the monarch did not know that Boruta was none other the devil himself. And so, since the 14th century, the new lord of the castle, the devil Boruta, has been roaming the castle dungeons on cloudy days.

Sobota's history is highlighted by the fact that in 1655, during the "Swedish Deluge", Stefan Czarniecki fought in the neighbouring field one of the few victorious battles against the invaders in our region.


DO in Łowicz

Knightly castle in Besiekiery


D. Redlicki

In the village there are the ruins of a late Gothic knight's fortress build ca. 1500 thanks to the efforts of Mikołaj Sokołowski, a Brzeź pantler and Dobrzyń castellan. The structure is situated on an artificial embankment placed in a middle of pond which serves as the castle moat, fed by the Orłówka River.

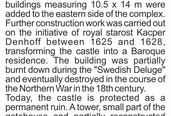
The castle in quadrilateral in shape (38 x 40m) and the was built of brick on a stone foundation. It originally consisted of perimeter walls, residential building and a gatehouse.

Around 1653, Jan Szczawiński, castellan and voivode of Brześć Kujawski, rebuilt the castle in the Baroque style. At this time, an octagonal tower section was erected above the gatehouse with outbuildings erected on its either side and an arcaded gallery was added. Many elements added during this reconstruction have been preserved to this day. Particularly noteworthy are the preserved details of the Baroque stonework.

From the 17th century onwards, the building began to fall into disrepair. Nowadays, following the revitalisation of the castle grounds, the ruins are open to the public and a knightly tournament is held in the courtyard every year.

The origin of the castle's name is a subject of a local legend about a wager between the devil Boruta, the 'lord' of the Łęczyca castle, and the owner of the surrounding estate. The nobleman said that he would be able to erect a castle without using an axe ("bez siekiery" in Polish).

Royal castle in Bolesławiec


RPO of the Lodzkie Region

Bolesławiec is one of the oldest towns in the historic Wieluń region. Already in the 13th century it was a dynamically developing settlement point, which was linked to its convenient location at the crossroads of important trade routes connecting Masovia with Silesia and Moravia with Russia.

On the initiative of Duke Bolesław the Pious, the first defensive structure was erected. The castle was located on a hill, surrounded by riverside meadows located on the west bank of the Prosna River. Originally, the fortification was surrounded by a wall 170 m long and 7 m high, with a gate tower in the south part of the courtyard, within the wall perimeter. The castle itself consisted of a wooden residential house and utility outbuildings.

Around 1390, on the initiative of Prince Władysław of Opole, the castle was extended. In the northern part of the courtyard, an approximately 22 m tall, octagonal tower was erected and two buildings measuring 10.5 x 14 m were added to the eastern side of the complex. Further construction work was carried out on the initiative of royal starost Kacper Denhoff, who lived here in 1625 and, transforming the castle into a Baroque residence. The building was partially burnt down during the "Swedish Deluge" and eventually destroyed in the course of the Northern War in the 18th century.

Today, the castle is protected as a permanent ruin. A tower, small part of the gatehouse and partially reconstructed perimeter wall survive.

The castle also features a **museum hall** (98-430 Bolesławiec, ul. Młyńska 4, phone: 62 783 60 84), where you can view artefacts excavated during archaeological works.

In 1709, King Stanisław Leszczyński visited Bolesławiec. The monarch took up residence in a wooden mill adjacent to the castle.

Archbishop's castle in Drzewica


L. Dwdyński

Drzewica enjoyed its golden age at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, when it was owned by Maciej Drzewicki, Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of Poland. On his initiative, a magnificent residence was built between 1527 and 1535, of which only a permanent preserved ruin remains. The castle was built in the Gothic style, but over time it was gained some Renaissance features.

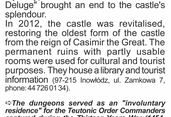
The rectangular structure with a dimensions of 37 x 43 m was erected to the south of the market square, on the floodplain of the Drzewiczka River, along the east-west axis. It was constructed from local sandstone, with bricks used for the window arches and gables preserved on the residential building and on the avant-corps on the east wall. A distinctive feature of the mansion's design is the brick double gables linked together by a brick chimney, crowning the north and south walls. In the southeastern part of the courtyard is an outbuilding, known as the chapel, with an avant-corps extending beyond the façade. In the interior, relics of paintings from the 18th century have been preserved. Of particular interest are the stone Renaissance window and door frames.

The fortress' heyday golden age came to an end in 1814 when a fire destroyed almost the entire building.

The castle is now privately owned and open to tourists. The keys to the gate are located in the neighbouring building.

It is worth mentioning that in 1534, Archbishop Maciej Drzewicki brought a holy relic from Rome – the skull of St. John Chrysostom, the patriarch of Constantinople – was placed in a richly ornamented reliquary in the local Saint Mary Evangelist parish church. During the "Swedish Deluge", this treasure was hidden so meticulously that it cannot be found to this day.

Royall castle in Inowłódz


Ł. Dwdyński

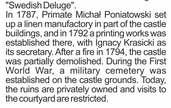
Medieval Inowłódz acted as a guard outpost at the border between the country's Lesser Poland district, Mazovia district and the Łęczyca Province. In the mid-14th century, a castle and city fortifications were built. The first stronghold was located outside the city limits, among marshy, swampy meadows in the meanders of the Pilica River.

The castle was built of local rusty-brown sandstone. It originally had two towers, one octagonal and victim in the northeast corner, the other located in the south curtain wall. The developments inside the walls were formed by two buildings joined into a L-shape. The entrance led through the eastern curtain wall and cover a wooden bridge spanning over a 20-metre-wide moat. There were windows in the outer walls of the castle. The upper floors had living quarters and staterooms. Later, the castle was rebuilt on several occassions reflecting the styles typical of the time. The "Swedish Deluge" brought an end to the castle's splendour.

In 2012, the castle was revitalised, restoring the oldest form of the castle from the reign of Casimir the Great. The permanent ruins with partly usable rooms were used for cultural and tourist purposes. They house a library and tourist information (97-215 Inowłódz, ul. Zamkowa 7, phone: 44 726 01 34).

The dungeons served as an "involuntary residence" for the Teutonic Order Commanders captured during the Thirteen-Years War (1454-1466). They are said to have stretched all the way to the St. Giles church, the oldest temple in the Łódzkie Region.
According to tradition, Queen Bona Sforza was a frequent visitor to Inowłódz and established one of the first vegetable gardens in the country at the foot of the castle.
It is also worth noting that this area was also a site of a skirmish on 9 September 1655, when Polish forces commanded by Stefan Czarniecki attacked the Swedes fording the Pilica River, killing 200 enemy soldiers.

Archbishop's castle in Łowicz


Ł. Dwdyński

From the 12th century until the partitions of Poland, Łowicz was the administrative centre of the estate of the archbishops of Gniezno, which came to be known as the Łowicz Duchy. In 1355, on the initiative of Abp. Jarosław Bogoria Skotnicki, construction of the present castle began on the site of the former castle.

The archbishop's stronghold was built on the Bzura River. The original Gothic castle consisted of two buildings parallel to each other, a residential and a service building, a gate tower and a wall enclosing a courtyard to the west. The castle covered an area of 0.200m2.

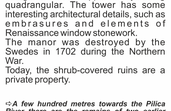
In the Renaissance, the austere castle was rebuilt in the Renaissance style, adding residential features and lightness to the building structure. The complex was surrounded by a moat, fed by the waters of the Bzura River. In the 17th century the site was surrounded by earth ramparts with bastions at the corners. The castle was burnt down during the "Swedish Deluge".

In 1787, Primate Michał Poniatowski set up a linen manufactory in part of the castle buildings, and in 1792 a printing works was established there, with Ignacy Krasicki as its secretary. After a fire in 1794, the castle was partially demolished. During the First World War, a military cemetery was established on the castle grounds. Today, the ruins are privately owned and visits to the courtyard are restricted.

A few hundred metres towards the Pilica River there are the remains of two earlier defensive buildings of Majkowice. The oldest one was a wooden defensive tower located in the meadows on a mound, built in the 13th century, while the other one was erected in the 14th century on the banks of the river. It was built of brick and fieldstone. The latter object is referred to as "Surdęga". A relic of the foundation, used as a defence post during the Second World War, has survived to this day. The "Surdęga" castle was owned by Florian Szary, a knight immortalised in the pages of his novel "Jelita - legendy herbowa" by Ignacy Jan Kraszewski.

The castle of Łowicz was one of the most important and most magnificent residence of the Primates of Poland until 1795. As many as 12 of them rest in the local cathedral.
The thresholds of the Primate's castle have more than once hosted distinguished guests. Among them were the monarchs Sigismund II Vasa, Sigismund Augustus, Stefan Batory and Jan Kazimierz Vasa. Ignacy Krasicki, the most outstanding poet and fabulist of the Polish Enlightenment, resided in the castle from 1795 to 1801.

Knightly castle in Majkowice


J. Koprowski

Rawa Mazowiecka was one of the most important towns in historic Mazovia. During the period of Provincial Division (1138-1320) it was a part of the Mazovian Province, remaining under the rule of the Mazovian dukes until 1462, when the Province was annexed into the Polish Crown by King Casimir the Jagiellonian. In 1313, Rawa became the capital of the duchy.

The 14th-century local stronghold, of which only ruins remain today, was built in the eastern part of the town at the forks of the Rawka and Rylka rivers. The castle was built on the initiative of Semowit IV, Duke of Masovia (d. 1426). It was built on a regular quadrilateral plan with a dimensions of 64x66 m. In the south-western corner of the site an octagonal main tower was built, which survives to this day and was adapted in the 16th century for artillery defence.

In 1507, the castle was partially destroyed by fire. The reconstruction carried out until 1519 led to the creation of one of the most powerful Polish fortresses of the 16th century. The stronghold succumbed to the Swedish invasion during the "Deluge of the 17th century."

Today the castle is a permanent ruin with a reconstructed main tower and a section of the perimeter walls with guard porches. At night it is impressively illuminated.

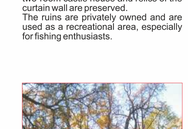
The castle is governed by the **Rawska Land Museu** (96-200 Rawa Maz., ul. Łowicka 26, phone: 781 700 503), which presents thematic exhibitions in the ruins during the summer.

From 1563 until the partitions of Poland, the Rawa stronghold had been the repository of the "quarter treasury", also known as the "Rawa treasury", for the financing of the so-called quarter army, i.e. the permanent army of the Republic of Poland serving to defend the borders in the event of an unexpected attack. The money to maintain these troops came from a quarter of the revenues flowing into the state coffers from the royal demesne.

Ducal castle in Rawa Mazowiecka


J. Koprowski

Knightly castle in Wojsławice


J. Koprowski

The local castle, often referred to in the literature as a fortified manor house, was probably built in the mid-16th century on the initiative of the local landowner Piotr Wężyk. Set on a roughly square plan measuring 21 x 23 x 22 x 23 m, it originally consisted of a two- or three-storey residential house (9 x 23m) leaning against the southern perimeter wall, and a courtyard (10 x 20m) in the northern part, surrounded on three sides by perimeter walls. The eastern curtain wall and a gate with a smaller door. A tower (half-cylindrical in its lower part) was attached to the north wall of the gatehouse, which also filled the northeastern corner of the structure. In addition to its function as a protection of the entrance, it probably served as the castle chapel. The walls likely had porches. Today, only the walls of the two-room castle house and relics of the curtain wall are preserved.

The ruins are privately owned and are used as a recreational area, especially for fishing enthusiasts.

Residential castle in Gorzkowice

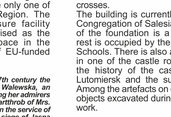

M. Wiewiesiuk

From the second half of the 16th century until 1725, Gorzkowice remained under the ownership of the Koniecpolski and then the Walewski families. The former are credited with the construction of a local defensive town in the early 17th century. However, it was probably never completed. The plan was to build a small magnate's residence, modelled on the "pałlazzo in fortezza" type of residence, fashionable in Western Europe at the time and combining the function of a manor house, axially shaped residence with a defensive function.

An earth embankment measuring 90 x 120 m and the foundation section of the castle house were constructed. The building was sturdy in the gate wall and was divided into four rooms in both bayses. The corners were reinforced with buttresses. This positioning allowed the tower to dominate the Prutka valley and its crossing.

Today, this scenically interesting site has been revitalised as the only one of its kind in the Łodzkie Region. The

Knightly castle in Lutomiersk


R. Gołek

To the northeast of the centre of the former town, on a hill within the Ner floodplain near the mouth of the Pląsa River, was also a place where rulers of Poland stayed during their big game hunts in the surrounding forests. According to the chronicler Jan Długosz, these circumstances urged King Casimir the Great to build a castle. The royal hunting lodge was built north-west of the town in the mid-14th century. The fortress consisted of a residential building, called the Great House and measuring 13 x 31 m, and a quadrilateral tower measuring 5 x 5 m. During reconstruction in the 15th century, the buildings became surrounded by a perimeter wall, and wooden farm buildings were erected in the courtyard located in the southern part of the complex.

The residence was destroyed by the Swedes during the "Deluge". In the 19th century, the ruins were dismantled by local residents.

Today, the castle hill is occupied by residential buildings. Relics of the former fortress include a buttress, originally attached to the perimeter wall in the northeastern part of the fortification, a fragment of the gatehouse wall and the vaulted cellars under the castle hill at 11 Podzamcze Street and 2 Konecka Street.

In 1239, during a meeting in Przedborze between the district rulers, the Sandomierz duke Bolesław the Chaste with his mother, Duchess Grzymisława, and Konrad Mazowiecki with his son Ziemowit, it was agreed that the castellanies located beyond the Pilica River in the Duchy of Łęczyca (Żarnów, Małogoszcz and Skrzynno) would be incorporated into the Sandomierz Duchy and into its Lesser Poland.
An important event was the granting of municipal rights to the village of Łódzka by King Władysław Jagiełło in the castle in Przedbórz, on 29 July 1423, which gave rise to the present-day capital of the province.

Royal castle in Przedbórz


R. Gołek

Przedbórz is a small town founded before 1136 as a centre of royal demesne, at a crossroads established by the Pilica River. It was also a place where rulers of Poland stayed during their big game hunts in the surrounding forests. According to the chronicler Jan Długosz, these circumstances urged King Casimir the Great to build a castle. The royal hunting lodge was built north-west of the town in the mid-14th century. The fortress consisted of a residential building, called the Great House and measuring 13 x 31 m, and a quadrilateral tower measuring 5 x 5 m. During reconstruction in the 15th century, the buildings became surrounded by a perimeter wall, and wooden farm buildings were erected in the courtyard located in the southern part of the complex.

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Royal castle in Sieradz

RPO of the Lodzkie Region

Sieradz is one of the oldest settlement points in central Poland. During the reign of Bolesław the Bold, it became the seat of a castellany. Until the mid-13th century, it belonged to the Duchy of Kuyavia and became the capital of an independent duchy, then of an entire district, and from the 14th century of the Sieradz province.

The original castellan's stronghold was situated on the east of the old town, on the floodplain of the Żeglina River and had the character of a timber and earth fortification. During the reign of Leszek the Black between 1264 and 1278, the building underwent major reconstruction. The ramparts were strengthened and a masonry rotunda was erected to serve as the ancestral chapel. Then, on the initiative of Casimir the Great, a brick castle was built.

In its heyday, during the reign of Władysław Jagiełło, the castle consisted of perimeter walls measuring approx. 220 m, a quadrangular gatehouse erected in the 15th century, the royal chapel, tower, main residential building and a wooden courthouse.

Destroyed by the Swedes during the "Deluge", it was rebuilt around the year 1670. Over the following years, the castle slowly declined. Its existence came to an end with the final demolition of the ruins in 1800. The castle grounds were also partially damaged during the Second World War. The only remnant of the Sieradz castle is the Castle Hill hiding the foundations of the castle.

Sieradz was also the place of unusual coronation. On 16 June 1383, opponents of Jadwiga's election as King of Poland hailed Siemowit IV, Duke of Mazovia, as the country's ruler. Siemowit planned to abduct and marry Jadwiga to become the rightful monarch. In the end, however, due to pressure from the magnates of Lesser Poland, the would-be king renounced his right to the throne.

Knightly castle in Sobota

DO in Łowicz

The medieval history of Sobota is alluded to in the Gothic Revival style of the 19th-century palace of the Zawisza family. According to archaeological investigations, the body of the building contains the remnants of a 15th-century brick hexagonal tower with a side length of 4.5m, supported by corner buttresses.

It is the relic of a towering castle-residence belonging to the Doliwa family of Sobota.

Based on the Gothic building, a Renaissance manor house was built around the middle of the 16th century, which obliterated the original character of the castle.

The present two-storey Gothic Revival palace, known as the "castle", is set on a rectangular plan with an octagonal tower adorned with a cannelation, situated in the northeastern corner of the building. The castle-palace is surrounded by a park with historic trees. The building was renovated in the years 1975-1976 and converted to residential use. It is currently a private property.

Knightly castle in Ujazd

D. Kwapisiewicz

In the centre of the former town, surrounded by a park, there is the 1812 Gothic Revival palace of the Ostrowski family. It conceals relics of earlier defensive and residential buildings, including the walls of the late-medieval tower from 1474 belonging to Piotr Tiuk of Stryków and the 17th-century residence of Kasper Denhoff.

The oldest castle grounds consisted of the main residential building known as the "Great Townhouse", the perimeter walls, the gatehouse closing in the grounds from the north, and a wooden house. The south wall of the dwelling house is now the north wall of the early 19th century palace and is the only visible relic of the Gothic building.

The castle house was rectangular in shape, measuring 10 x 10 x 22 x 22 m, and was one-storey, one-bay with two rooms, covered by a gabled roof. The gable walls extended towards the north into the perimeter walls. The western part of the curtain wall, spanning 26 m, ran north at an obtuse angle to the dwelling house, enlarging the courtyard. The eastern curtain wall ran north for the first nine metres along a line perpendicular to the house Façade before turning westwards and continuing for 22 metres along the western curtain. A 21-metre-long wall enclosed the site from the north. To the outer face of the western part of this curtain was an 8 x 9.5 m building with a cylindrical tower, five metres in diameter, situated on the southwestern corner of this building. It is likely that the building itself acted as a gatehouse.

Today, the castle grounds with the palace are a private property.

Royal castle in Wieluń

D. Kwapisiewicz

Wieluń was one of the most important centres of royal administration in the Piast state. In the early Middle Ages it was the seat of a castellany and then of a land, incorporated into the Sieradz Voivodeship in 1420.

One of the city's most impressive buildings was the castle, which no longer exists, built by Casimir the Great between 1350 and 1351. It was established in the southeastern part of the city, as an important part of the urban fortification system. Additional protection was provided by the moat and the castle pond,